invention will, it is believed, have a shorter average length of stay and fewer inflammatory complications than would have been expected based on experiences with whole protein-based diets which contain less than 2.3% of calories as a mixture of omega-3 fatty acids (linolenic, EPA and DHA).

It should be understood that various changes and modifications to the presently preferred embodiments described herein will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Such changes and modifications can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention and without diminishing its attendant advantages. It is therefore intended that such changes and modifications be covered by the appended claims.

We claim:

1. A method for providing nutritional support to a trauma, burn or post-surgery patient comprising the step of enterally administering to the patient a therapeutically effective amount of a composition comprising:

22% to about 28% of the total calories as a protein source including protein hydrolysate and free amino acids, the protein hydrolysate including less than 35% by weight, peptides having a chain length of more than five amino acids;

a lipid source; and

a carbohydrate source.

2. The method of claim **1** wherein the free amino acids comprise less than 20% by weight of the protein source.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the protein source comprises less than 20% by weight peptides having a chain length of more than nine amino acids.

4. The method of claim **1** wherein the composition includes a cysteine content of at least 0.25% of the total calories of the composition.

5. The method of claim **1** wherein the protein hydrolysate comprises 70% to 50% of casein hydrolysate and 30% to 50% whey hydrolysate.

6. The method of claim **1** wherein the lipid source includes a source of medium chain triglycerides, a source of omega-3 fatty acids and a source of omega-6 fatty acids.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the protein hydrolysate is produced through use of pancreatic enzymes.

8. The method of claim **1** wherein the protein source contains substantially no whole proteins.

9. A method for providing nutritional support to a trauma, burn or post-surgery patient comprising the step of enterally administering to the patient a therapeutically effective amount of a composition comprising:

a protein source comprising approximately 80% to 85% by weight of protein hydrolysate and 15% to 20% of free amino acids;

a lipid source;

a carbohydrate source; and

the composition having a caloric density of at least 1.3 Kcal/ml.

10. The method of claim **9** wherein the protein hydrolysate includes less than 35% by weight peptides having a chain length of more than five amino acids.

11. The method of claim **9** wherein the free amino acids comprise less than 20% by weight of the protein source.

12. The method of claim **9** wherein the protein source comprises less than 20% by weight peptides having a chain length of more than nine amino acids.

13. The method of claim **9** wherein the protein hydrolysate comprises 70% to 50% of casein hydrolysate and 30% to 50% of whey hydrolysate.

14. The method of claim **9** wherein the protein hydrolysate is produced through use of pancreatic enzymes.

15. The method of claim **9** wherein the protein source contains substantially no whole proteins.

16. A method for providing nutritional support to a trauma, burn or post-surgery patient comprising the step of enterally administering to the patient a therapeutically effective amount of a composition comprising:

22% to about 28% of the total calories as a protein source including protein hydrolysate and free amino acids, the protein hydrolysate comprising less than 20%, by weight, peptides having a chain length of more than nine amino acids;

a lipid source; and

a carbohydrate source.

17. The method of claim **16** wherein the protein hydrolysate comprises less than 35% by weight peptides having a chain length of more than five amino acids.

18. The method of claim **16** wherein the free amino acids comprise less than 20% by weight of the protein source.

19. The method of claim **16** wherein the protein hydrolysate is produced through use of pancreatic enzymes.

20. The method of claim **16** wherein the protein source contains substantially no whole proteins.

21. A method for providing nutritional support to a trauma, burn or post-surgery patient comprising the step of enterally administering to the patient a therapeutically effective amount of a composition comprising:

a protein source including protein hydrolysate and free amino acids, the protein source having a cysteine content of at least 0.25% of the total calories of the composition;

a lipid source; and

a carbohydrate source.

22. A method for providing nutritional support to a trauma, burn or post-surgery patient comprising the step of enterally administering to the patient a therapeutically effective amount of a composition comprising:

a protein source which provides about 22% to about 28% of the total calories and which includes protein hydrolysate and free amino acids, the protein hydrolysate comprising less than 35%, by weight, peptides having a chain length of more than five amino acids and less than 20%, by weight, peptides having a chain length of more than nine amino acids;

a lipid source which provides about 33% to 45% of the total calories, the lipid source including a source of medium chain triglycerides, a source of omega-3 fatty acids and a source of omega-6 fatty acids; and

a carbohydrate source which provides 35% to about 40% of the total calories.

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